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## Contributed Notes.

### PRONUNCIATION OF HEBREW AMONG THE RUSSIAN JEWS.

The pronunciation of Hebrew on the part of the majority of the Russian Jews is very corrupt. The cause of this phenomenon is very obvious. The great Russian Talmudists, or, as they are called in Hebrew, *Lamdānīm*, look with suspicion upon those who study Hebrew from a literary and scientific point of view. The study of Hebrew grammar is regarded, at least in certain communities, as the first step toward atheism.

The Jews of Russia, Poland, and Germany follow the so-called *Aškenazī* pronunciation, while among the Spanish and Portuguese Jews what is termed the *Sephardic* pronunciation prevails. The *Sephardic* pronunciation is the older, as is shown by the transliteration of Hebrew words and names in the cuneiform texts as well as in the *Septuagint*, in *Josephus*, and in the *New Testament*. It is also more in conformity with the pronunciation of the cognate languages. Therefore it is followed by the majority of Hebrew philologists.

The principal difference in the pronunciation of Hebrew among the *Aškenazīm*, especially among the Russian Jews, is the different accentuation. There is a strong tendency among the Russian and Polish Jews to accentuate all words on the penult instead of on the ultima. For instance, *בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא* is pronounced by the Russian Jews, as correctly stated in Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, *brésis bóro*. The only words that are always accented on the ultima are *אֱלֹהִים* and *אֲדֹנָי*. This is evidently a trace of the original accentuation, and the preservation of the original accent is due to the sacred character of the divine names.

The tendency to accent all words on the penult is so strong that even in a dissyllabic word, the first vowel of which is *Šwā*, no matter whether simple or composite, the Russian Jews will often accentuate the first syllable; a composite *Šwā*, under the influence of the accent, being pronounced like its corresponding full vowel, and a simple *Šwā* like *Qérê*. For instance, *אֲשֶׁר*, the relative pronoun, is as a rule pronounced *áser*; *אֲדֹנָי עֹלָם*, "the Lord of the universe," is usually pronounced *áden élom*; *יֵצִיר*, the post-biblical word for creature, is pronounced *yécir*.

As to the pronunciation of the consonants, the chief peculiarity of the Russian Jews is their failure to differentiate similar consonants, several consonants being pronounced alike. For instance, *נ* and *כ* are as a rule not pronounced at all. From the frequent confusion between *נ* and *כ* in the *Talmud*, it is evident that *כ* had lost its original sound even in the *Talmudic* period. Some Russian Jews pronounce the *כ* like the French *son nasal*. *ג* and *ד* are always pronounced as stops, never as spirants. *ט* and *ק* are pronounced without the characteristic glottal catch; that is, they are pronounced like the English *k* and *t*, so that there is no distinction made between *ט*, *ק* and *ת*, *כ*, except when the *ת* and *כ* are raphetized or spirantic. Nor is there, as a rule, any distinction made between the sibilants *ס*, *ש*, *שׁ* and spirantic *ת*, all being pronounced as simple *s*. Few Jews differentiate *שׁ* from *ש*, both being pronounced as *Sámekh*. Spirantic *ב* and *ך* are usually pronounced as

v. The correct pronunciation of ך as *w* is rare. The semi-vowels ך and ם are always pronounced as consonants, nor do they ever form diphthongs with a preceding vowel. For example, סוּסִי, מַיִם, and בַּיִת are pronounced *sūsow*, *máyim*, and *báyis*, respectively. צ is pronounced as *ts* or like German *z*, never as Arabic ص. The other consonants are pronounced alike by the Sephardim and the Aškenazim.

As to the vowels, the Russian Jews pronounce the Hebrew words so quickly that it is impossible to say whether a vowel be long or short. In unaccented syllables the vowels are often pronounced as Šwā. Only in accented syllables are the vowels distinctly heard. Qāmēç is pronounced by a few like the long Swedish *å*, or like English *aw*. This pronunciation, however, is quite rare. The majority of the Russian Jews pronounce it as short *o*, making no distinction between Qāmēç and Qāmēç-ḥaṭṭph. Hölēm is generally pronounced as *ē*, like Çêrē in the Sephardic pronunciation. The correct pronunciation of the Hölēm as *ō* is rare. The Polish Jews pronounce it like English *oi* in oil.

The substitution of a short *o* for a long *a*, and *ē* for *ō* is very common also in Yiddish, the German dialect of the Jews. For example, the German words *haben*, *graben* and *Täg* are pronounced *hoben*, *groben*, and *Tog*; on the other hand the German adjectives *hoch* and *röt* are pronounced *hēch* and *rēt*. This interchange between *ō* and *ē* may be compared to the *ō* in Hebrew in contradistinction to the *ē* in Assyrian, in words like *rōš* (רֹאשׁ) "head," Assyrian *rēš*, and *çōn* (צֹן) "flock," Assyrian *çēn*, or Hebrew *Sargōn* (סַרְגֹּן) instead of Assyrian Šarrukēn, so that the pronunciation of the Hebrew *ō* among the Russian Jews is practically on a par with the Assyrian *ē*. The missionary, Wolf, tells us that the Jews of Çan'a in Arabia pronounce the Hölēm in the same way. Instead of *mōre* (מֹרֶה) "teacher" they say *mēri*. Hîrēç, both *longum* and *parvum*, is pronounced as short *i*. Çêrē is pronounced by the Russian Jews as *ē*, by the Polish Jews as *i* in *bride*. For instance בְּרִיאַת is pronounced by the Russian Jews *brésis*, by the Polish Jews *brísis* (braisis).

Qībbūç and Šūrēç, no matter whether long or short, are pronounced by the Russian Jews as short *u*, by the Polish Jews as French *u*.

Simple Šwā, when pronounced at all, is sounded like Çêrē, but perhaps uttered a little more rapidly, *e. g.*, וְאָמַר is usually pronounced *veómar*; וְשָׂא is pronounced *sévo*. The Šwā of Wāw copulative is as a rule pronounced. In other cases usage differs widely. Some Russian Jews always pronounce it as Çêrē, while others do not pronounce it at all. There are a number of very common words in which Šwā is never pronounced. For example, כְּחוּבִים, בְּרִכָּה, and קָלָה are pronounced *ksúvim*, *brócho*, and *qlólo*.

Composite Šwā in the beginning of a word is usually pronounced like its corresponding full vowel. For instance חָלִי, "disease," is generally pronounced *hóli*. In the middle of a word it is pronounced like a full vowel when it is in an accented syllable; in an unaccented syllable it is pronounced either very hurriedly, or is not pronounced at all. The third person plural imperfect of עָמַד is usually pronounced *yaámdu* instead of *ya'm'dá*. The first word of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah is pronounced by some *nahmá*, by others *nah'má*.